Managing Cases of COVID-19 at New York City Colleges and Universities: What Higher Education Institutions Need to Know

Before you reopen your college or university, you must follow these steps:

- Develop a Safety Plan and maintain it on site.
- Read the New York State (NYS) guidelines and affirm compliance. The State requires that you affirm that you have reviewed and understand the State-issued industry guidelines and that you will implement them.
- Read the Checklist for Higher Education Reopening Plan and submit a Reopening Plan.

All administrators, staff, students and visitors must remember the four key actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission:

- Stay home if sick: Stay home if you are sick unless you are leaving for essential medical care (including COVID-19 testing) or other essential errands.
- Physical distancing: Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wear a face covering: Protect those around you. You can be contagious without symptoms and spread the disease when you cough, sneeze or talk. Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Practice healthy hand hygiene: Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; clean frequently touched surfaces regularly; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; and cover your cough or sneeze with your arm, not your hands.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is my college or university required to implement initial or routine COVID-19 testing for students or staff?
NYS does not mandate initial (prior to entry) or routine testing of students or staff. See the NYS guidance for more information on screening and testing. For information about COVID-19 testing generally, and for help finding a New York City (NYC) testing site, visit nyc.gov/covidtest.

How will I learn that there is a confirmed COVID-19 case at my college or university?
You will learn about a confirmed COVID-19 case (someone who has a positive diagnostic test) from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) or because a student or staff reports it to you.

What should I do if I learn of a confirmed COVID-19 case at my college or university?
If you have not already heard from the NYC Health Department, have your health services team or administrator contact the 24-hour NYC Health Department COVID-19 Hotline at 866-692-3641. They should inform the operator they are calling from a college or university. Assist students living on campus with isolation, as described below.

The NYC Health Department will verify whether the individual is a confirmed case of COVID-19. They will also determine if any student or staff are close contacts of the confirmed case. A close
contact is someone who has been within 6 feet of a confirmed case, for at least 10 minutes.
Identified close contacts will need to quarantine, as described below. If your university or college has instituted its own testing or contact tracing program, you must still assist the NYC Health Department and the NYC Test and Trace Corps in their contact tracing efforts.

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?
A person in isolation or quarantine stays home and does not go out except to obtain essential medical care (including COVID-19 testing) or for essential errands, such as buying food, if there is no other way to do so. They otherwise cannot leave home, including to attend classes or school activities.

Isolation applies to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. The isolation period for COVID-19 is at least 10 days after symptom onset, with the last 24 hours without fever (without using fever-reducing medicine), and an overall reduction in symptoms. For people who never had symptoms, isolation is for 10 days from the date of their COVID-19 diagnostic test (the specimen collection date).

Quarantine applies to a person who is a close contact of a confirmed case. The quarantine period for COVID-19 is 14 days from the last exposure to the COVID-19 case. Quarantine also applies to someone who was in a high burden state that is on the NYS Travel Advisory. In that case the person’s quarantine period is 14 days from the day they left the high burden state.

How should my college or university provide isolation or quarantine for students and staff?
Students living in shared student housing who must isolate or quarantine should be provided a private room, have food delivered to them and trash picked up. If necessary, schools may house confirmed positive cases together (shared rooms and bathrooms) but symptomatic students who are not confirmed cases should be isolated separately; students in quarantine may not be quarantined with other people but they may share a bathroom with proper cleaning and disinfection practices. Students may return home if they can safely isolate or quarantine there.

Colleges and universities providing isolation and quarantine facilities for their students or staff should provide support such as food and medicine, medical and mental health services, and access to technology and other resources that enable ongoing participation in academic classes, assignments, and remote activities as much as possible. This will help those isolating or quarantining to stay home and reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 at your school.

Can my college or university use the NYC Hotel Program to provide isolation and quarantine for students and staff?
Colleges and universities should provide quarantine arrangements for their students returning from out of state. If you need assistance with this, please contact the Test and Trace Corps. If you need assistance with isolation or quarantine for cases/contacts, call the NYC Hotel Program at 844-692-4692.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 8.12.20